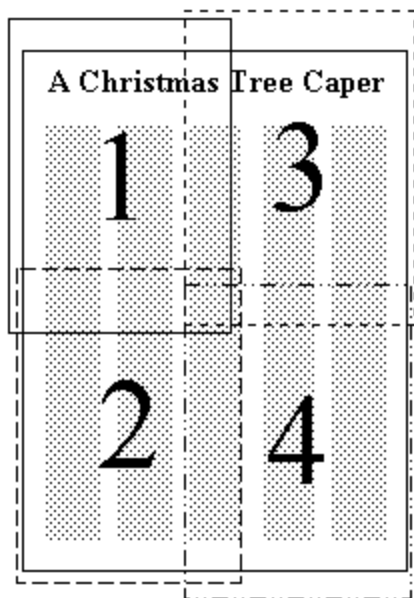


NOTE: This newspaper appearance was divided and enlarged to fill 8 ½" x 11" pages, roughly in the manner shown below.



TERRY

SARGE!
LOOKIT!

Cricket in the Heart

By JACK AND IRMA REITCI

(© 1964 by News Syndicate Co., Inc.)

THE GIRL WHO OPENED the door was in her early 20s. Her gray eyes regarded Marcella Tannier and me. "Yes?"

"We'd like to see the Justice of the Peace," I said.

She looked uncertain. "I'm the Justice of the Peace, Darcy Stevens."

I cleared my throat. "I suppose you marry people?"

"Yes," she said. "I guess I do. I've never done it before, but I've got a booklet telling me how. Please come in."

Marcella's cool blue eyes weighed and sorted the comfortable furniture in the living room. "How did you ever get to become a Justice of the Peace?"

"I was elected," Darcy said. "By one vote." She rummaged through some pigeon holes. "We hadn't had one for ages, but there was still a place for him on the ballot. In the last election, somebody wrote my name in the blank space."

Darcy held up a green booklet. "Marriages, page 12."

She studied the booklet a moment. "Marriage license?"

"Here," said Marcella.

"Blood test results?"

"Yes."

"Rings?"

"I have them," Marcella said.

"I'm also supposed to ask," Darcy continued, "if either of you is entering this marriage under duress."

"Absolutely none," Marcella said. "Isn't that right, George?"

"Well, if you won't marry us, we'll go somewhere else."

"The technicality would still remain," Darcy said.

Marcella studied me. "We'll wait." She sighed. "What do we do until then?"

"How about skin-diving?" Wilbur suggested helpfully.

"I have a roast in the oven that should be about done," Darcy said. "Do we have hunger in common?"

When we sat down to the meal, Wilbur said. "Someday I intend to get married, too. I'm devoting a lot of my spare time to finding the right type of woman. When I'm not skin-diving, of course."

"I like fishing," I said. "It satisfies man's primordial instincts to pull on one end of a line and have something pull back."

Wilbur carved the roast. "My wife's got to know how to entertain important people."

WILBUR BOASTS OF HIS AMBITION

Marcella agreed. "The wife of an executive must have the proper degree of respect for those above and the proper tone of command for those below."

really prefer to be defending an innocent man unjustly accused of doing 27 in a 25-mile speed zone."

Darcy added more soap to the water. "It seems to me that a woman like Marcella would absolutely demand a large formal wedding."

I tried to think of something to say.

Darcy was watching me. "You put your foot down. One of the rare times in your life. You said, 'Marcella, I absolutely refuse to go through with a big wedding. Either we get married quietly or the whole thing is off.'" She smiled. "Bet you got the surprise of your life when she agreed to a quiet, quick ceremony."

After we finished the dishes, we rejoined Wilbur and Marcella.

At 5 to 2, Darcy left us for a few minutes.

FACE ANOTHER 3-DAY WAIT

"Let's go on with the wedding," she said brightly when she returned.

"Yes," Marcella said. "I guess we might as well."

Darcy got her booklet and glanced down at the marriage license. Then she frowned.

"Yes?" I said.

"According to this marriage license, your name is George Wellington Clemson."

Marcella took the license from Darcy's hand. "Well, that cuts the cake."

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I nodded.

"We'll need two witnesses," Darcy said. "But I'm allowed to be one. My brother Wilbur's home on vacation. I'll get him."

She was back in two minutes, followed by a young man whose handshake was absolutely firm. "W. Hendricks Stevens. Call me Will."

"George Washington Clemson and Marcella Tannier," I said, completing the introductions.

"Tannier Plastics," Marcella said.

SHE'LL GET HIM A PROMOTION

"George is in the legal department of my father's firm," Marcella explained. "I'll see that he's shifted to management as soon as we're married."

"A wise move, Miss Tannier. Management is the channel to the top," Wilbur approved.

"George graduated with honors from law school," Marcella continued. "He's one of the Philadelphia Clemsons."

Darcy turned a page. "Never heard of them."

"My ancestors," I said, "were some of the first people to borrow money, from Benjamin Franklin."

Darcy fingered the marriage license. "You know that a three-day waiting period is required after this is issued?"

Marcella nodded. "We got the license on Thursday."

"What time?"

"About 2 in the afternoon," Marcella answered. "Why?"

Darcy glanced at her watch. "Your three-day waiting period doesn't end for another two hours."

Marcella arched an eyebrow. "A quibbling technicality."

"Well maybe," Darcy said. "But if I married you now, there'd always be a question of the legality of the ceremony. Isn't that right, Mr. Clemson?"

"I suppose so," I said.

Marcella tapped her foot.

WILBUR BOASTS OF HIS AMBITION

Marcella agreed. "The wife of an executive must have the proper degree of respect for those above and the proper tone of command for those below."

"I have ambition," Wilbur said. "I know where I'm going and I don't have to be pushed."

Marcella looked at me. "I like a man who doesn't have to be pushed. It's hard enough taking care of the social side of things without having to do your husband's job, too."

"The country needs people like us," Wilbur said.

Darcy glanced my way. "Any comments?"

"For almost two hundred years," I said, "we Clemsons have stood ready to serve our country in some diplomatic capacity or other. But no one's ever asked us."

"You've got to plan your life," Wilbur said.

Marcella nodded agreement.

After we had finished the delicious meal, Wilbur and Marcella took their coffee into the living room, while Darcy and I cleared the table.

She stacked the dishes and ran hot water into the sink. "You might as well join the others."

I took off my coat. "I'll wipe. I suppose Darcy, you'll get married one of these days, too?"

"It's a family tradition," She grinned. "How in the world did you ever get to be a corporation lawyer?"

I shrugged. "One thing led to another, and here I am. I'd

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I shook my head. "No, I think we'd better go back to Philadelphia."

Wilbur and Darcy followed us out to the car.

"This is a beautiful quiet little town," Darcy said. "There's plenty of fishing at the river."

"And skin-diving," Wilbur said.

Marcella and I were about five miles in the country when she said. "She did a nice job of erasing."

"Oh?" I said.

"Changing the Washington to Wellington," Marcella said.

"Why would she want to do a thing like that?"

"You couldn't guess?"

THEY SHARE LITTLE TOGETHER

I kept my eyes on the road. "When you noticed that she'd changed my name, why didn't you say so?"

"I didn't want to create a scene," Marcella said. She was silent for a moment. "Marriage is a serious proposition."

"Yes," I said.

"The people involved should have similar interests. Similar drives. The trouble with you Clemsons is that you wander through life enjoying yourselves."

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Wilbur Stevens knows where he is going."

I nodded. "Not only that, but it doesn't even depress him."

"Has it ever struck you, George, that we actually have very little in common?" Marcella asked.

I said nothing.

"We are pointed in different directions."

I slowed the car. "Shall we go back?"

"Tomorrow," Marcella said.

"I've got to pack some sports

clothes and buy one of those skin-diving outfits." She smiled to herself. "I'll take that second-lieutenant of industry and build him up to five stars."

Wilbur and Marcella saved their marriage for June of the next year.

Darcy and I got married on the next election day. After the ceremony we went to the town hall and she voted.

That's how I got to be Justice of the Peace. By one vote.

THE END

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